



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

Adopted by the Council on 7th November 2022

INTRODUCTION

Bognor Regis Town Council is committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. This means treating people fairly, valuing differences and removing the barriers that prevent people from fully participating in public life and realising their full potential. This policy sets out how we will make equality integral to the way we reach decisions, making Bognor Regis Town Council a fully accessible and inclusive organisation that welcomes and respects diversity.

This policy applies to all who represent Bognor Regis town Council in any capacity including elected Members (Councillors), employees, volunteers, agency workers and consultants.

We all have a right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. We are also responsible for ensuring that our own actions and behaviours are fair and that we respect the dignity of others.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

- Recognise that it is unlawful to discriminate under the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics which include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- To be respectful and accepting of differences, including those not covered by the Equality Act, when dealing with colleagues, customers, and members of the public.
- To encourage staff to challenge discriminatory practices by bringing them to the attention of management or by using (or encouraging the use of) appropriate policies and procedures.
- The non-discrimination principle inherent in this policy includes the prohibition of discrimination against an individual because they associate with someone of a particular race, religion, sexual orientation, age, etc, for example an employee who is married to someone of a minority ethnic origin or has a dependent who is disabled.
- The prohibition on discrimination applies equally to situations where someone thinks or perceives (whether rightly or wrongly) that a colleague is of a particular race, sexual orientation, religion, age, sex or that they have a disability, is a transgender person, or is pregnant.

UNDERSTANDING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Equality is not about 'treating everyone the same' but recognising that everyone is different, and that people's needs are met in different ways. We would define equality as essentially being about fairness and ensuring that we all have the best possible chance to succeed in life whatever our background or identity.

Diversity is about understanding that everyone is unique, recognising, respecting and celebrating the added value that differences bring.

Inclusion is where difference is seen as a benefit and where perspectives and differences are shared, leading to better decisions. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels valued, that their contribution matters, and that can perform to their full potential, regardless of background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

OUR COMMITMENT AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

Bognor Regis Town Council is equally committed to eliminating any form of unlawful discrimination in services that we provide. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, however, although we encourage job applications from all sections of society, a true representation of our community can be difficult to achieve. Our aim therefore is for our workforce to be mindful and consider the diverse needs of our customers.

When we are providing services or facilities, staff must not discriminate against or harass a member of the public. We are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability including the removal, adaptation, or alteration of physical features. In addition, we need to think ahead and make reasonable adjustments to address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

OUR COMMITMENT AS AN EMPLOYER

Bognor Regis Town Council is committed to equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion. We will adopt and follow working practices, policies and procedures which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination.

It is this Council's policy to treat all job applicants and employees fairly and equally, regardless of sex, pregnancy, transgender status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital status, civil partnership status, age, race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origins or disability. The Council aims to be an employer that reflects all sections of society.

Responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity to our colleagues and our customers predominately lies with management. However, the co-operation and contribution of all employees and the employer is essential for the success of this policy. The policy is therefore brought to the attention of every employee.

Through this policy and training and development, the Council will do all it can to promote good practice in this area to eliminate discrimination and harassment as far as is reasonably possible. The organisation will also continue to work towards its goal of encouraging and promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion within the workforce.

The Policy in Practice

Detailed below is a list of provisions and working practices the Council has put in place to ensure equality at work: -

- a. This policy applies to the process of recruitment and selection, promotion, training, conditions of work, pay and benefits and to every other aspect of employment, including general treatment at work and the processes involved in the termination of employment.
- b. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be based on aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- c. Where increased pay and/or enhanced benefits are offered to employees based on length of service, these are intended to reward loyalty, maintain motivation, and reflect higher levels of relevant experience.
- d. The policy applies to job applicants (both internal and external) and all employees and other workers whether full time, part time, temporary or seasonal.
- e. When establishing criteria for recruitment and promotion into vacant posts, the Council will consider carefully whether any minimum or maximum number of years of relevant experience is necessary for effective performance of the job. Such restrictions will not be imposed unless there is a proper job-based reason why they are necessary.
- f. Employees should note that the imposition of any provision, criterion or practice which has a disproportionate adverse impact on someone for a reason related to sex, transgender status, race, married status, civil partnership status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, or age will be unlawful unless it can be objectively justified. In the event of any query or doubt, your Line Manager should be consulted.

- g. The Council recognises the dangers of unconscious bias arising at work, which is where an opinion is formed on an individual by a manager or colleague without them necessarily being aware they have formed it. There are many different forms of unconscious bias, ranging from an affinity towards those of a similar background to placing too much significance on what has been identified as a negative trait.
- h. The Council works against forms of unconscious bias in all decisions taken for employment, including recruitment, promotion, and training opportunities, with a focus on promoting diversity and inclusion.
- i. To counteract unconscious bias at recruitment stage, the Council will implement the following procedures:
 - a. Maintaining a diverse panel wherever possible to make decisions but, in any event, to always have more than one person interviewing.
 - b. Referring to specific job criteria when making recruitment decisions.
 - c. Prohibiting panel members with personal relationships to applicants from sitting on the selection panel.
 - d. For the panel to reach consensus on the final selection decision.
- j. The Council does not operate any compulsory retirement age, and each employee may choose for themselves when to stop working, subject to them continuing to be sufficiently able to perform their job to a satisfactory standard.
- k. The Council will, whenever it is operationally possible to do so, consider flexible retirement if an employee wishes to pursue this as an option prior to full retirement. The precise reduction to the number of days or hours worked will be discussed individually in each case.
- l. Employees who are disabled or become disabled in the course of their employment should inform the organisation about their disability. Management will then arrange to discuss with the employee what reasonable adjustments to their job or working conditions or environment might assist them in the performance of their duties. The employee will also be encouraged to suggest any adjustments that they believe would be helpful. Careful consideration will be given to any proposals and, where reasonable and reasonably practicable, such adjustments will be made. There may, however, be circumstances where it will not be reasonable or reasonably practicable for the organisation to accommodate proposals put forward by the employee.

COMPLAINTS

Any member of staff may use the grievance procedure to complain about discriminatory conduct. If the matter relates to sexual or racial harassment or harassment based on disability, sexual orientation, transgender status, religion or belief or age, then the complaint may be raised directly with the Town Clerk. The Council is concerned to ensure that staff feel comfortable about raising such complaints. No individual will be penalised for raising such a complaint unless the substance of the complaint is untrue or the complaint is made in bad faith, for example out of malice.

Where an employee is falsely accused of discriminatory conduct, then they may implement the Council's grievance procedure.

Any employee who makes a false accusation of harassment will be subjected to disciplinary action. In serious cases, such behaviour may be deemed to constitute gross misconduct and may result in summary dismissal.

Members of the public wishing to make a complaint should be directed to the Council's Complaints Procedure Policy which can be found on the Council's website (www.bognorregis.gov.uk).